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## HUMAN EVOLUTION

Continuing the series of thirteen talks by Dr. Alfred Taylor

A study of theosophical teachings reveals that man is an evolving being--spiritually as well as physically. Each of us is on a pilgrimage which extends through millions of years. If we attempt to confine man to the happenings of one life, our view becomes distorted, and we seem to see injustice and needless suffering. It is as though we tried to understand a tree by what we observed in a day of its life. With such a circumscribed view, most of the reality of the tree would be lost. To really understand a tree we must know how it arises from a seed, how it develops, matures, produces seeds of its own and dies. But even this would be a limited view of a tree.

A closer approach of tree understanding would follow if we studied the past evolutionary stages of the tree. In this way we would begin to appreciate that the reality of a tree is not in its physical forms, but is rather to be thought of as a particular design which has come down through the ages, gradually evolving and developing as it passed through millions of tree bodies. The mature tree is a temporary physical manifestation. The seeds contain in a mysterious fashion, tree design and the information necessary to embody that design in a new tree.

A human being has evolved far beyond the tree stage of development; but like the tree, the total reality of a man is not to be discovered in a study of his affairs for one lifetime. That which is destined to become a human being comes forth from the One Life, or Spirit, the basic reality of the universe. At first, that which will later become a human being, is as a divine spark. It is only after a long journey, through heavy veils of physical matter, that the qualities we associate with a person become actualized. Before the human stage is attained, there must be experience successively in mineral, plant and animal kingdoms of life. Only after this vast effort is concluded, does that which came forth originally from the divine, assume a human form and human characteristics.

A study of theosophical literature gives us clearly and dramatically the story of human evolution. After the life wave has progressed through mineral, plant and animal forms it attains to the vastly different human kingdom in its primitive beginnings. The gap between the successive kingdoms is very great. We are aware how fantastically different a plant is from a



mineral form, and again, how the animal kingdom contrasts with the plant kingdom. As the life wave enters the human kingdom, from animal types, there may not be outward evidence of a dramatic change, but inwardly there is a tremendous difference between the human and animal kingdoms. In the transformation from animal to human being, man began with races more primitive than any which inhabit the world at the present time. Long ages and numerous incarnations in these undeveloped human forms were necessary before lives in present day races became possible.

What are some of the qualities which characterize human beings? In the first place, man is much more conscious than even the most advanced animal. Man is conscious of the world around him, and he differentiates himself not only from his fellow beings, but also to some extent from his physical body. Most people identify themselves with their physical form, but they know that they are not a particular part of the body such as a limb. Other qualities which set man off from the animal kingdom are the capacity for abstract thinking and the use of a language to express thoughts. But it is in such spiritual qualities as sensitivity to truth and beauty, that man attains to a truly different order than exists in the animal kingdom. Add to these the qualities of altruism and compassion, the capacity for sensing the oneness of life, and we begin to approach maturity as human beings. These qualities require for their development long experience in comparatively primitive conditions of life. It is only through the lessons learned in living that we become aware of the great law of karma, or the justice which rules the world. Extreme egotism, tempestuous actions against others, ruthless disregard for the rights of fellow beings, these and other weaknesses slowly fade from the individual in the light of the suffering they bring to him.

Few of us had completely learned these and other lessons; but life, the patient teacher, sooner or later brings to us glimpses of a higher wisdom, of ways that bring beauty and tranquility to our lives. But for ages we carry with us some vestiges of the earlier stages of our evolution, and during times of stress we may be surprised by their appearance in our emotions and thoughts. Gradually these fade out of our hearts and minds.

Man has come a long way in his evolution as a human being. But we know from the Ageless Wisdom, and from our own observations, that we have yet far to go before we are through with this human stage in our evolution. In the Bible, St. Paul declares the goal of human evolution, ".....until we all come into the

fulness and the stature of Christ." Very few of our present humanity are within sight of this accomplishment.

Theosophical teachings, the findings of science, and our own experience emphasize individuality as an outstanding characteristic of men and women. Each person is unique, in varying degrees, all the way from his biochemistry to the capacities and qualities of the Spirit. This indicates, among other things, that we are free to move forward in our evolution at our own pace. Two individuals who attained to the human stage in their evolution at the same time may now be far apart in the degree of their development. We have the privilege of lingering along the road of our evolvement or of moving ahead as rapidly as possible. We may say, "what difference does it make whether we evolve rapidly or slowly, since we all attain the same goal in the end?" But it is really important both from the standpoint of our own welfare and the welfare of all humanity to move ahead at a reasonable pace. We can thus save ourselves some thousands of years of unnecessary suffering, and, what is more important, be in a position to help others who are seeking guidance.

We are all aware that there is an incredible amount of suffering among the billions of people who inhabit this planet. And we know, too, that a good share of it is due to ignorance, to lack of knowledge. The main goal set before us in the teachings of the Ageless Wisdom is that of helping our fellow beings into the light. We are to attain to the stature of Christ in order to follow in His footsteps and dedicate ourselves in relieving the suffering in the world. If we seek knowledge and development for ourselves only, we are following a path which will end finally in desolation and despair.

All the countless numbers of human beings come forth originally, as said before, as sparks from the One Flame, or Spirit. Hence we are children of God. In the Bible, it is stated, "...ye are all children of the most High." This being so, it becomes obvious why we cannot isolate ourselves from others, why we cannot take the fruits of our evolutionary development for ourselves. For better or for worse, humanity constitutes a brotherhood. It is as necessary for us to accommodate ourselves to this fact as it is for us to obey the law of gravity. In the New Testament, there is continuous emphasis on this concept.

During the long ages of man's evolution, each individual must pay his debts, and earn his way as he goes; in this effort



tremendous help is given to him. We know in our present state that such necessary physical influences as sunlight, the air we breathe, and the work of green plants in furnishing us with food cannot be provided by man. Our millions of years of evolution have preceded in a setting, this planet earth, which has been provided for us. We can, of course, assume that all these things just happened by themselves, as proclaimed by some materialistically minded scientists

But we know better. There is nothing in our experience, or in science, to justify such a belief. No, we owe a mighty debt to the universe, and it is part of the plan of evolution that a stage will be reached when we will pay back to others all that has been done for us.

Human evolution is part of the glory of this universe, a glory we share with other evolving creatures. Through unthinkable periods of time we have slowly developed our spiritual natures. We have attained to a growing consciousness of ourselves and of this mighty universe of which we are a part. Much remains to be done. The world is still plagued with wars and with lesser forms of cruelty and suffering. But amidst such pain and turbulence, we are being prepared for a future, radiant beyond our comprehension.

## LAW, OR KARMA, IN HUMAN AFFAIRS

As we look around us and observe the happenings in people's lives, we get the impression that chance or luck is the deciding influence in many important events. Things seem to happen to us in a hit-or-miss fashion.

The question arises, "Is this a universe of law and order, or is there an element of randomness in its operation?" We are naturally concerned with our place in the scheme of things. We would like to have some assurance that justice really rules the affairs of mankind. We recall Job's complaint (Job 14:1-2): "Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth as a shadow, and continueth not."

Actually, as we consider the subject, we realize that we tend to divide the world into two aspects---the material world and the world of living beings in which man himself is the dominant influence. In the material world we accept the rule of law and order. We know, for instance, from our own experience, that our machinery, our houses, our clothes are made and exist in a rational, logical manner. We can observe, too, that the law of cause and effect governs these man-made items. A similar pattern is generally accepted as true for the vast phenomena of so-called inanimate nature. The relations of the planets to the sun, the swing of the moon around the earth, tides, weather, the seasons, all follow sequences which are in harmony with order and law.

The more we know about the material world, whether man-made or naturally occurring, the more definitely do we note that chance, luck and the haphazard, have no place in it. This is one reason the material aspect of nature is appreciated by the human intellect. It can be fitted into mathematical formulations. It is logical and consistent.

But when we turn to the world of living beings, and especially to man, we seem to enter a different world. Instead of dealing with a system of law and order, we appear to be in a realm where things can happen at random. Most people take it for granted that luck, or chance, is a big factor in the occurrences of a human lifetime. Moreover modern science emphasizes such thinking.

It is a remarkable characteristic of modern science that the body of man alone has a place in its great generalizations and



concepts. Since scientists are concerned only with the material world, only the physical man is assumed to be real. Thoughts and emotions cannot be measured or weighed and so are considered to be products of body tissue interactions. The psychic in man, according to most psychologists, is real only as it can be related to physiological phenomena.

This attitude, which has become so strongly established among scientists, has had a profound effect on the thinking of wide segments of human populations. There is an over-emphasis on material things since it is considered that only in matter do we encounter the real, the tangible. As a result, it is assumed without question that while conditions in the physical world are governed by the law of cause and effect, in human affairs things can happen at random.

It is strange that the dogma of materialism should be so dominant at the same time that science is establishing, ever more effectively the rule of law in the universe. We know now that matter itself has evolved from invisible, imperceptible energy. This total universe is recognized as a manifestation of a completely mysterious something called electromagnetic energy. We know, too, that energy can only be known second-hand, through its effects in material systems. Hence we have the paradox of scientists attempting to relate the psychic side of human beings to physical tissues, even though the tissues themselves have their roots in the invisible and imperceptible.

Of course, affairs appear to have a quality of randomness when we lack understanding of what is involved in a human being and in human life. The scientific view is that man, or any other creature, comes into being with the formation of the physical body and ceases to be when the body dies. However, if we consider man from the more realistic viewpoint given in the teachings of the Ageless Wisdom, then it becomes clear that there is as much law and order in a human life as in physical phenomena.

According to Theosophy, man is more than blood, bone, muscle and other tissues which make up the body. To suppose otherwise is to lapse into concepts which have no support in experience. We would never dream of confusing the message of a great painting with its physical canvas and pigments, nor a symphony with the vibrations in the air which carry the design of the music. Man is spiritual in nature, and the objective of life on this earth is to awaken his spiritual faculties. This takes a long time.

Man goes through life after life. He continues to be reborn until he has completed the spiritual development possible for him on this planet. When that is accomplished he leaves this sphere to undergo experience in the much different conditions of a higher world.

Theosophy, or the Ageless Wisdom, teaches that there is one master law in all the universe. It is the law of equilibrium, or cause and effect. In the East this law is termed Karma. Karma applies to all aspects of nature. Hence, it dominates human affairs and insures that perfect justice rules the events of a person's lifetime. According to this teaching things happen to us as the result of previous actions, emotions or thoughts. As we help or injure others, the consequences to us are exactly balanced--for good or evil. We can be filled with friendliness and sympathy, or we may have feelings of hate and ill will, whichever we choose; but we will reap as we have sown. As we send out good or bad thoughts, there is a payment in kind. Thus, there will accrue to us serenity or mental turmoil.

Now one life is a very brief interlude in our evolutionary progress, and it is not always possible to balance our credit for good and evil in any one incarnation. Accordingly, the rewards due for our behavior in one life may be carried over to a later period. Under such circumstances, unless we are aware of the great truth of reincarnation, things may happen to us which seem to be unrelated to anything we have done.

However, upon reflection it is evident that chance could have no place in a universe such as ours, where things are so precisely and delicately organized into a system that continues for billions of years. For instance, in line with what we mentioned earlier in the talk, we know that in the construction and use of machines, the law of cause and effect prevails. Hence, it follows that in the far more intricate systems of nature, random happenings are unthinkable.

When we turn to religion, we discover that there is great emphasis on the thought that our lives are governed by law. In the Bible, we read (Matt. 5:18), "For verily I say unto you, Till Heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." And again in Galatians 6:7, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Many other Biblical passages could be quoted to the same effect. All the great religions emphasize the rule of law in human affairs.



If the prevailing idea that many important events in our lives are due to chance or luck were true, it would place us in a very precarious position. It would mean that anywhere, at any time, there would be the possibility that some random event could change our destiny. But in a world of law and order, what we are now, in capacity and circumstance is the result of past behavior; and we are now in thought, word and deed, building our future.

Someone may ask, "What about the forgiveness of sins?" We can think of this teaching in this manner: A person who has been pursuing the wrong course awakens to this mistake and changes his ways. As he does so, he opens himself to divine influences which help him to keep on the right path. He still must pay his debts; the law of cause and effect continues to be effective. But to such a person, the payment is a minor matter now that he is in harmony again with the flow of spiritual power which sustains all mankind. And he knows that in the truest sense his sins are forgiven.

Another question may be raised, "If what we are now is the result of past behavior, and the past cannot be changed, are we not prisoners of what has gone before?" The answer is that present effort modifies past effort. If we have spent many lives promoting certain bad habits, we can begin in the present to exert effort against these weaknesses. Our destiny is in our own hands. We receive help in this task from the great spiritual leaders of mankind. But we must open ourselves to this support by turning our faces to the light and away from the darkness.

The whole universe in all its aspects is a universe of complete law and order. We can be sure that whatever our lives may be in joy or sadness, we are receiving only what we have earned.

The great American philosopher, Ralph Waldo Emerson, summarized the law of Karma when he said, "Every secret is told, every crime is punished, every virtue rewarded, every wrong redressed, in silence and certainty."

## THE TEACHING OF REINCARNATION

Theosophical teachings point the way to truths which are vital to rational and effective living. These truths, stripped of the details of their applications, are inherently simple. They appeal to experience, reason and intuition. We learn that man is a spiritual being, slowly awakening to his true Self as he evolves, pressed onward by the stress and strain of life on earth. Man is a spirit, but the spirit is asleep until awakened by the stimulus of pleasure and pain experienced in this physical world. We live our lives, slowly gaining knowledge of the law that governs our actions and all the phenomena of nature. This is the law of karma, or cause and effect. It is this law that guides us so that we learn what is good and what is evil.

Yes, man is a spirit and awakens to this fact by long contact with the dense, hard realities of physical nature. A third concept arises as a necessary result of the ideas of evolution and karma. We know that the average person changes very little in spiritual development during one lifetime. Hence, it is reasonable to suppose that we go through many lives on this planet. This teaching is known as the doctrine of reincarnation.

We can summarize, then the main points of theosophical teachings by stating that man awakens to his true nature as he goes through many lives, guided by the law of karma. The goal is given by Paul when he said that we are to attain "...unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

It is an interesting fact that many ideas which at first seem strange to us, later are realized to be quite self-evident and a necessary part of the reality of things. This is certainly true for the concept of reincarnation, or reembodiment. When we first encounter this idea it may seem fantastic and unbelievable. But as we think about it we begin to realize that the principle of reembodiment is involved in the affairs of both man and nature.

How is the idea of reembodiment concerned with human affairs? The answer is that all progress in our material civilization depends on this principle. A house, a machine, or any other human construction, is made up of a design, or a plan, which has been thought out, and secondly this plan or design is embodied in suitable materials. We think about what we are going to make, we work out a design, say for a house, and draw it on paper to form a blueprint. The blueprint is studied by the



workers, and following its guidance, wood, metals, cement, glass, and other materials are combined together to form the dwelling. All man-made constructions are made up in this way. There is always the combination of idea, or design with materials.

If we consider this matter a little further, we note that the house wears out in time, but the design does not age and can be reembodyed to form a new structure. Further, it is obvious that improvements in the design are made in the blueprint or planning stage.

In this process of man-made things and their improvement, their development, it is evident that we are concerned with essentially the same principle as the reincarnation necessary for human evolution.

For example, back about the beginning of the present century, inventors began to consider the idea of motor vehicles. Plans were worked out and embodied in suitable materials to form the first primitive automobiles. The experience gained in the use of these early cars enabled man to improve the design and to produce better models. Since those early days, as we all know, the automobile has evolved to its present advanced stage. Car design, which we must remember is of the mind, has been passed through millions of car bodies as it developed and improved. Today's automobile contains the fruits of the experience gained in past models. The individual car comes from the factory shiny and new, but in the course of time it wears out and is junked. Meanwhile, the plan or car design, modified in the light of past experience, goes on into new materializations.

In this process of man-made objects and their development, it is evident that we are concerned with essentially the same principle as that which makes reincarnation necessary in the evolution of the human spirit.

But it is not only in human constructions that we observe the idea of reembodyment at work. It is also to be seen in the development and evolution of all living forms. Each animal or plant develops from a tiny point of matter, the germ cell. The germ cell is analogous to the blueprint of a human construction. It contains in a highly condensed state, the coded summarization of information necessary for development and growth into the mature form. The mature animal or plant grows old and dies. But new plant and animal forms arise as the germ cells bring about reembodyments. Modern types of plants and animals have evolved as particular designs have been passed through count-

less bodies of the past.

Without this principle of the continuation of the inner reality in the design or forms, through repeated embodiments, there could be no human progress, and there could be no evolution in nature. A man comes forth in a particular incarnation, the result, the end product of all he has experienced and learned in past lives. His life continues for a number of years during which time there are degrees of pleasure and pain, of success and failure. The body finally wears out and is discarded. The individual then spends a period of time in the heaven world, digesting or assimilating the experiences of the recently concluded life on earth. When this has been accomplished, the desire for life in the physical world again arises. The individual is born once more into circumstances needed for his continued spiritual development. Reincarnation may occur as a man or as a woman, in this race or that. All will be within karmic law and strict justice.

It is through repeated lives that we grow in wisdom, power and effectiveness. The inner spiritual self awakens gradually. It is only when our spiritual growth has been accomplished, in so far as it pertains to the earth cycle, that we cease to be born on this planet.

Our experience points to another reason for accepting the teaching of reincarnation. If we think of a human being as having only one life, then it becomes impossible to reconcile with a universe of law and order, the difficult experiences and happenings we observe in the lives of our fellow men. For example, some babies are born with terrible defects in mind and body. These tiny infants must be completely innocent, and if they have just one life to live it is impossible to harmonize their suffering with the idea of justice.

However, if we think of the reality in man as the Spiritual Self which passes through numerous lives, then we can appreciate that in any one life there may be conditions of great stress and of great opportunities, too, whatever the circumstances in a particular incarnation may be, they are in accordance with law and order. The Spiritual Self learns and evolves through pain and suffering as well as in happiness and well-being. It is through such experiences that the soul matures and the individual assumes his or her rightful place in the Divine Plan. We not only observe the suffering of tiny infants, but also we note that millions of people, just because they happen to be born in a poor country, live in conditions of poverty and want. Here



again the one life idea makes it difficult to see the justice of such a situation. And then there are the differences in capacities between one individual and another. A great genius, such as Mozart, manifests his talent while still a small child. On the basis of the reincarnation concept, we can appreciate that such a person might have spent much time and effort, in past lives, in developing aptitudes in the field of music. Otherwise we are forced to conclude that all is chance, randomization, fickle fortune casting forth success and failure, pleasure and pain, here and there on this or that race, or person, regardless of merit, regardless of justice.

Perhaps one reason why many people find the teaching of reincarnation difficult to understand or are repelled by it is because of a misunderstanding of the realities in human nature. Man is a spirit. In the New Testament, Paul speaks of the natural man and the spiritual man. The one he designates as the man of earth, while the other is the Lord from heaven. The natural man is a temporary manifestation, changing with each birth. It is the spiritual man that continues from life to life. Man is the Spiritual Self. As we evolve, the time will come when we will awaken at the spiritual level. Then we will remember our past lives and understand the necessity for our long pilgrimage through so many incarnations.

The goal before humanity is most radiant, but it is achieved only at great cost in effort and experience. Some move much faster on the road to understanding than others. We are free to set our own pace. But to those who begin to appreciate the teachings of the Ageless Wisdom, there comes the realization that, as we progress, we can help others to do likewise. We begin to understand something of the great tie of brotherhood which unites all human beings into one family. The doctrine of reincarnation illuminates our understanding. This teaching makes us realize that perfect justice rules our lives as well as the affairs of nature.

## HEALTH

It may seem strange for a Radio Theosophy broadcast to be given on the subject of health. What have theosophical teachings to do with mental, emotional and physical well-being? The answer is that there is an intimate relationship between our philosophy of life and our health. Medical men are giving more and more attention to so-called psychosomatic factors in disease. It is now considered by many authorities in medicine that more than half of human ailments are due to emotional or mental pressures. Hence, it becomes important for us to have some understanding of the ways and laws of the universe and our relationship to them, since such knowledge brings peace of mind, and this results in better physical health.

We will all agree that there are realities in the world, whether we know of them or not. Man has slowly learned, through ages of experience and investigation, something of the nature of the universe. He has discovered much, especially where the physical world is concerned. Our modern civilization testifies to man's understanding of aspects of nature which has enabled him to make rapid progress, especially in engineering and technology. The means of communication, transportation and other constructions have markedly changed and improved as we have learned more of the laws of the material world.

But man himself and all living beings remain a mystery. The biologist has been able to acquire much descriptive knowledge, but his information has not led to the spectacular advances so characteristic of the physical sciences. Man is an unknown in a most profound sense, and we should not allow the ponderous volumes produced by workers in the fields of biology and medicine to blind us to this fact. At the present time, scientists do not understand how the individual has evolved through ages of time to his present status, and their ignorance is just as profound in relation to embryological development. We can go further and state that the biological functioning of a living organism, whether plant, animal or man, is an almost complete enigma to science. The engineer knows how a machine such as an automobile works, he knows its nature. It is a product of his scientific knowledge and thinking. But a single living cell from a human being is almost infinitely more complicated in structure and functioning than all of man's productions put together. For that reason, we can understand why the workers in the sciences of the living have accomplished so much less than the physicist and the chemist.



From the standpoint of the laws which govern our health and well-being, we are forced to transcend modern science. Biologists and physiologists, at present, are under the spell of the physical sciences. The result is that they approach living organisms from a materialistic and mechanistic viewpoint. According to the doctrine of materialism, man is the result of blind actions and reactions which through the ages have formed our universe and everything pertaining to it, including man. This doctrine, which is so dominant in scientific thinking, removes the possibility for significant advances in the understanding of living forms. Naturally we cannot expect people to live harmonious and healthful lives when the dominating concept of the age equates a person to the physical body.

If we are the physical body, then it follows that we have no stability in the present and are doomed to destruction at some date in the future. Accordingly, those who are consciously or unconsciously under the sway of this idea, tend to be overmindful of possessions, of material things, and place great emphasis on the physical body. Materially minded people may have a seeming contentedness, when they are healthy and well supplied with the goods so prized by them, but when illnesses arise or circumstances bring about lacks in material things, then mental and emotional tensions are common.

The general impression is that medical science has brought about greater health and an increased life span. A recent scientific report states that, "One of the more cherished fictions of popular medical articles is that modern medicine has significantly increased our life span." More children, because of the investigations of such scientists as Pasteur and others, now attain the adult state, but otherwise the human life span is about the same now as in the past. What we do note is an increasing degree of chronic illnesses. This has progressed to the point where there is constant need to extend hospital facilities. Mental institutions are especially overcrowded, and in addition, we have a crime rate which is growing more rapidly than the population, and most crime is definitely in the category of ill health. So that, in spite of our growing effectiveness in engineering, we are not doing so well with the care and maintenance of human bodies, emotions and minds.

As said earlier in this talk, we cannot base our lives on such a superstition as materialism without paying a price in health and well-being. It is essential that we live in accordance with the radiant truths of the universe if we are to have health of

mind or body. There is the Ageless Wisdom of mankind which has stood the test of countless generations of human thinking and human investigation. This wisdom is put forth with special clarity in theosophical teachings, but for those who are prepared to recognize it, it is seen also in the works of religion and philosophy. The data of science bear witness to the truth of these teachings, and our own logic and intuition make them self-evident.

When, through a study of Theosophy, we know ourselves as spiritual beings that are evolving or awakening through numerous lives, then stability enters our hearts and minds. We realize that each individual is a manifestation of spirit and that our bodies are temporary forms necessary for life in the physical world. We learn of the law of compensation, or karma, and recognize that our present difficulties are due to past thoughts, emotions and actions. The same law of karma makes it possible for us to improve the present and prepare for ourselves a better future.

Yes, a study of Theosophy illuminates much that was dark and uncertain in our lives and in the lives of those near to us. With this knowledge, there is a growing assurance that this is a world of love and justice.

As we learn these truths, tranquility grows in our minds and hearts. Every level of our being becomes more in tune with the harmony that is the reality of the universe. Intemperate attachment to material things, to prestige, to our physical bodies gradually fades out. We begin to be healthier and happier.

There are times when medicines are needed to help us regain our health, and the physician and the surgeon have their places in combating physical disabilities and disease. But we can do much to preserve our physical well-being through the happiness that comes with right understanding. The truths of the Ageless Wisdom of mankind are in accord with common sense and with our deepest aspirations. They make life more beautiful, more buoyant, and more hopeful. How much needless suffering can be avoided as we are able to appreciate this wisdom.

The great enemy of serenity and effectiveness in our lives is ignorance. Man builds up monstrous forms as he is stimulated by fear and uncertainty. In the past, man placed his trust in his religion, but in these days of scientific marvels, religious faith has grown dim. This is the great age of gadgets, machines, and wonder-drugs, but the stark realities of suffer-



ing and death are still with us. Science has supplied better tranquilizers and other pain-relieving drugs, but more than pills is required to face the dramatic and seeming tragic events of a lifetime. In the midst of ever increasing automation of home and industry there is inner tension which often leads to ill health.

We overvalue the material world, and this leads to an intensified struggle for possessions and prestige. This in turn stimulates pride, arrogance, hate, depression and other negative thoughts and emotions. Life under such circumstances becomes filled with unsolvable problems. There is the intense effort to attain security through property, which is doomed to failure, since in the end that which we are trying to secure, the physical man, itself ceases to exist.

All this can be changed as the individual begins to understand the realities of man and nature. The teachings of the Ageless Wisdom reveal a world of sharp contrast to that pictured by the prevailing concept of materialism. The dark shadows of doubt and fear are dissipated. Mind, emotions and even the tissues of the body assume their normal relaxed tone. At all ages, under all conditions, peace of mind brings peace to the body.

The Ageless Wisdom leads to an expansion of consciousness. We begin to sense that the universe is a universe of love and law. In the light of this knowledge we live healthier lives, and when the time comes for us to leave this earth plane, we can go quietly, without fear and without regret.

## PSYCHIC INFLUENCES

We live in two worlds, the seen and the unseen. The seen, or perceived world, is the one which impresses us so vividly. It is the world we think we know. It is the world we consider to be the measure of stability and reality. We are so influenced by what we receive through our sense organs, that it becomes difficult for us to believe there can be anything else in ourselves or in nature.

Yet most of the physical world itself is imperceptible. We are able to sense only a very narrow band of vibrations which give us light and color. In addition to what we can see, there are other manifestations of electromagnetic energy which we do not sense at all but which can be detected by certain instruments.

The energy which enters our homes to provide us with radio and television programs is as invisible to us as the energy of a thought or an emotion. Yet, we know it exists, and we depend upon it to give us entertainment and instruction. In the world generally we see the surface of things. The vibrant, unthinkable power which is the essence of the physical world cannot be detected through our sense organs. It is obvious that we experience only a very tiny fraction of what is going on in the beings and things around us. We are aware of these limitations when they are pointed out to us.

To supplement our knowledge of the physical, a study of theosophy brings to our attention nonphysical planes and influences. We are all familiar with some aspect of nonphysical forces. Such states as thinking, emotion, consciousness, are realities in the lives of all of us. Hence we are not without some background of experience in the field of psychic influences.

In modern medicine, it is becoming increasingly evident that emotional and mental pressures are responsible for a good share of today's illnesses. The condition of the body certainly affects our minds and emotions, but the reverse is also true.

At the present time there is much interest in the less recognized types of psychic influences. Many people are dabbling with hypnotism, mediumship and the so-called consciousness expanding drugs. It is in keeping with the prevailing emphasis on materialism, that people who proceed with caution in their contacts with dangerous chemicals, disease bacteria, or power producing machines, will rashly experiment with the more deadly



forces inherent in the misuse of the psychic aspect of nature. According to theosophical teachings, based on careful research, the human physical body is interpenetrated by emotional mental bodies. Just as the physical body is made up of matter from the physical plane of nature, so the emotional and mental bodies are composed of the much finer matter from the emotional and mental planes. This knowledge is important because it reveals something of the relation which exists between the emotions and thought of one person with those of another.

Man, as a physical being, plays his part in a world which is shared with various other beings and things. It is a complicated world, containing many hazards along with much that sustains and gives us pleasure. We know that there are certain laws which must be obeyed with regard to our behavior and the care of our bodies. There are times and places which are unfavorable to us. We avoid, when we can, the violent aspects of nature such as storms, temperature extremes, earthquakes. Likewise, we try to keep away from the violent aspects of our fellow human beings. We are careful to protect ourselves as much as possible from everything that threatens our health and welfare. We do not willingly leave the security of our homes and communities and rashly enter situations charged with uncertainties.

If now we turn to psychic affairs, we find that there are also conditions and forces most detrimental to our well-being. We all know something of these dangers. We are generally aware that such emotions as hate, envy, intolerance and the thoughts that go with them, promote distress and may in time cause illness. The more serious side of such thoughts and emotions arises from the fact that they tend to link us with a whole reservoir of pernicious psychic forces. We attract love and friendliness as we send out such feelings. There are great centers of thought and emotion on which we draw and to which we contribute. We can, on the basis of this knowledge, become centers of love and peace, or centers of turbulence and destruction. Most anyone can demonstrate for himself that peaceful thoughts build up an atmosphere of serenity and happiness, and that negative thoughts have just the opposite effect.

We are all familiar with the term hypnotism. This is a type of psychic influence well recognized, but little understood, in science and in medicine. A person in the hypnotic state thinks, feels and acts as directed. At the present time there is widespread use of hypnotism. Doctors use it in the treatment of

mental and emotional derangements and in association with some other conditions. But in addition to its medical use, many people are experimenting with hypnotism in amateur studies and pastimes.

According to theosophical teachings, the hypnotic domination of the will of one person by that of another constitutes a serious invasion of a person's psychic nature. Such a procedure cannot be justified aside from psychiatric practice, and its use even with mental patients is questionable.

Recently a group of Russian scientists at the University of Leningrad published the results of years of experiments with the hypnotic state. They have established some facts which are startling to the modern scientist, but which were known long ago to the student of Theosophy. These Russian investigators have discovered that hypnotism can be induced by mental telepathy. Further, the subject can be put into the hypnotic state without his knowing anything about it. The operator could be next door or a thousand miles away. Also, it appears that most ordinary people can learn to use this technique.

These facts which have resulted from years of careful scientific investigation bring to our attention a source of danger from psychic influences not usually considered. There have always been those who used the hypnotic power for evil purposes. But these recent scientific reports are likely to increase its misuse, since more people will give them serious attention.

At present, in this country, there is much interest in using drugs for inducing special emotional and mental states. It is generally assumed that by means of drugs, such as mescaline, it is possible not only to undergo unusual and pleasant psychic experiences but it is possible in this way to increase a person's capacities and talents along various lines. The long-term effect of these so-called consciousness expanding drugs is not known.

As remarked earlier, it is indeed strange to note that people who would never dream of tampering with a complicated machine, about which they know very little, will readily experiment with the inconceivable complication of a human being. Such persons will take part in exercises which lead to mediumistic or hypnotic states even though these conditions are little understood and are known to have had serious effects on many individuals. At the physical level, we believe in the reign of law and the necessity for proceeding in accordance with law, but we often



fail to appreciate that any approach to the unseen side of nature must also be based on understanding.

We do not get something for nothing. Special capacities, talents or the elimination of bad habits do not come from drugs, mediumship or hypnotism, except at a price which no one would knowingly pay.

There is a common sense approach to the psychic side of our lives. It is an approach we recognize as necessary in our affairs in physical nature. In the visible world, we generally know which is the tiger and which the domestic cat. We know that it takes work and understanding to produce anything of value. Where psychic influences are concerned, we know that harmonious thoughts and feelings of sympathy and friendliness toward others brings peace and health to mind and body. Any pioneering beyond these known states of mind and emotion needs to be done cautiously and on the basis of knowledge tested through the ages. A little learning is a dangerous thing in chemical and physical investigations, but ignorance is yet more dangerous to those who rashly pry into the world of psychic forces.

## THE TRANSITION CALLED DEATH

All around us we observe the aging, the wearing out of beings and things. Our possessions come to us full of their newness, but immediately begin to deteriorate and fade away. This transitoriness of forms is vividly brought to our attention in plants and animals. Here is a beautiful rose or some other flower. How soon it wilts and is discarded! In contrast to this, a tree, such as an oak, may persist with little change for more than a human lifetime, but finally it, too, grows old and dies. People who are fond of pets, such as cats and dogs, know how soon these animals complete the days of their life and pass away. All around us there is this sequence of the new which becomes the old, the beginning and the ending of forms. We know that as certain as the law of gravity is the law that where there is a beginning there must be an ending, where there is birth there must be death.

We can view all this in a fairly detached manner when such things as clothes, houses or cars are involved. And we can be reasonably calm as we observe the action of this law in the birth and death of animals. But when we realize that this same principle of impermanence applies to our own bodies, then we tend to be repelled and fearful. As long as we are in vigorous health there is a feeling that we will always be that way. We note death here and there among our friends and relatives or among those of public prominence, yet we never really believe it could happen to us. Intellectually we can say that, of course, death comes to everyone. But since the thought of dying is extremely depressing to most of us, the idea of such a transition applying to ourselves is rejected, at least when we are in good health. When illness arises, there is often a vivid feeling of anxiety. The individual then becomes aware of death as a possibility for himself. He becomes eager and anxious to do everything that can be done to regain physical well-being.

In this age of materialism, there is prevalent the belief that what we sense is the only reality, and so death is considered to be the greatest of all calamities. If what we see, touch, taste, smell and hear is the real, then we are our bodies, and death means the end of our existence. The procedure carried out at most funerals emphasizes the prevailing stress on the physical side of man and nature. The teaching of survival is expressed in the burial service; but the behavior of those immediately concerned, and the way the funeral is conducted reveal a conscious or unconscious identification of the dead



body with the person it has served in life. Otherwise there would not be so much concern about coffins and graveyards where perpetual care is assured. If a person has a leg amputated there is no thought of obtaining a casket and arranging for a service. In this instance, we know that the person is not the lost limb and so we have no concern about its disposal.

The way we live and the way we bury the physical remains of those who have passed on, reveals a devastating identification of the individual with the physical body. This is the basis for the frantic effort made to delay death as much as possible. People will undergo major surgical operations in order to extend life even for a few months.

A study of theosophical teachings can eliminate this dread of death which is such a prominent feature of our western civilization. As we are able to appreciate this wisdom we begin to realize that the transition called death is a necessary and happy incident in our growth and evolvment. Also, these teachings enable us to appreciate that something analogous to death is a necessary aspect of the evolution which brings increasing harmony and beauty to the universe.

The principle which necessitates that all physical forms must be temporary manifestations, can be seen in human constructions. How could we have developed the material aspect of our civilization without constantly building and discarding a succession of forms? In the early years of this century, there were, for example, primitive automobiles. These were scrapped in order to make way for improved car designs. In the years that have passed since the first cars were produced there has been a succession of new models. A car is a materialization or embodiment of car design which represents the thought of the designer. When improved car designs emerge from human thinking, it is necessary to materialize them in new bodies. Experience with a particular design of automobile leads to new ideas which can only be expressed in a new construction. Obviously, if there is to be progress in car models, then the old forms must be eliminated. Automobile design has passed through millions of embodiments in the course of its evolvment into modern types. The reality of an automobile, or any other human construction, is not in the material body but in the design which is a product of human thinking.

The same principle applies to plant and animal forms. In the process of the evolution of an oak tree, oak design has slowly evolved as it has been passed through millions of trees. The old forms must give way to the new, for life is ever pulsating

with creative energy and growth, and can express this growth only through a succession of forms.

Likewise, with the bodies of human beings---the reality in us is of spirit, and the physical body is an instrument by means of which the spiritual self can expand and develop through experience. As we acquire new capacities and qualities we require new bodies through which they can be expressed and utilized.

If we were to remain through the ages with the physical bodies we now have, there would be no progress. We would be trapped in our present limitations.

We hear many Christian people say man has a soul, or spiritual self, instead of stating that man is a spiritual soul. If we believe we have a soul, then who are we? Apparently the soul, according to this idea, is something apart from us. Hence, at death we die, but the soul lives on in some nebulous existence. Perhaps this idea has contributed to the unconscious belief that man is the physical body. Naturally if something in us, of which we know nothing, is all that survives death, then all the self we know dies with the body. But if we think of ourselves as the spirit, and the body as an instrument which we possess temporarily, then the whole situation is changed.

According to theosophical teachings, consciousness is of the spirit, as well as such qualities as love, will, sensitivity to truth. No psychologist or physiologist has ever obtained any data which indicated that tissues of the body can think or feel. The physical body is an instrument through which the inner self can communicate of manifest qualities and capacities which are of the spirit. A television set, for example, which is made of metal, glass, wood, wires and so forth, does not create in any way the pictures we see. We might dissect a television apparatus as minutely as human bodies have been dissected, and we would never find the source of the meaningful pictures and sounds it conveys to us. It would be just as foolish to suppose a television program originates in the television apparatus as it would be to think that the message of a letter originates in the paper and ink.

Delusion, or misinformation, leads to suffering, and the delusion that the material world is the real world continues to bring trials and suffering to mankind. This is especially so when we equate the reality of ourselves with the physical body. Such a misconception arouses fear, and fear leads to disease and pain.



Death is as necessary and as much a part of the Divine Plan as birth. We are pilgrim souls on a long journey which is taking us to a radiant goal. But to move forward on this long road, it is necessary to cast off worn-out bodies or vestures and to develop new ones which are in harmony with the needs of our spiritual growth.

Man is a spirit, and the physical body is an instrument through which the spirit grows in will, wisdom and truth. The universe is a universe of order. Perfect justice rules the world. Whenever appearances indicate otherwise, it is due to limited or defective knowledge or understanding. The death of our physical body is in accord with the necessities of the law and order that permeates all beings and things.

When we can learn to approach death as we would a pleasant journey to a land we have looked forward to visiting, then our lives will lose much of their worry and tension. We will realize that this transition, both for ourselves and for those near to us, is a happy event. It is a time when we pass from the rigors of earth life to a freer existence in happier regions.

## HARMONIOUS AND EFFECTIVE LIVING

We are all aware, in some degree, that there are laws or principles which govern the affairs of this world. At the physical level, we know from experience something about gravity, cause and effect, temperature influences, the cycle of birth and death, and many other evidences of the order which prevails all about us. We know that if we attempt to do something which is contrary to the system of prevailing laws, the result is frustration and failure. We do not question the results of dropping a heavy weight on our toes, or of jumping to the pavement from a high building.

The health of the physical body, as we all know, can be adversely affected if we neglect such items as proper exercise, diet, rest. We acknowledge the needs of our physical nature, even though we may be careless about providing for them. But when it comes to the more important issue concerned with the events and happenings of a lifetime, it is generally assumed that they are governed by chance, by good or bad fortune. In this modern age there is the tendency to assume that law governs physical affairs, and all the rest just happens without rhyme or reason.

It is strange that people should ever have fallen into the error that the universe can be orderly at one level, while at far more vital levels it is free from directing influences. Such a belief is not in accord with our experience, and it is not in accord with the history of mankind. Further, until we are able to realize that every aspect of the universe is governed by law and order we can never hope to attain to harmonious and effective living. As long as we think of the events of our lives as in the realm of chance, of lawlessness, we know the consequence must be disaster and despair. Most of us could not attain to tranquility in a world where such conditions exist.

We take it for granted that as we break a physical law the results are immediately forthcoming, but that a person may break moral laws and suffer only if caught and corrected. There is little disposition to accept the idea that perfect justice rules the world, that, to quote Emerson, "Every wrong is righted, every crime is punished in silence and in certainty."

All human experience, in the past as well as in the present, bears witness to the Biblical injunction, "As ye sow, so shall ye reap." The world we live in is orderly in all respects. It would be impossible to have a cosmos that was orderly in some ways and not in others.



Actually, all aspects of our universe are so interrelated that to break the laws of one level has repercussions on all other levels. For example, if we behave in a manner contrary to spiritual laws we will be adversely affected in our spiritual nature. But also we will be injured at other levels of our being, including the physical. Disease of the body can arise from improper nutrition, over-eating, lack of sleep and so on, but when the body is given the very best of care, it can still become seriously ill because of disharmonies in emotions and thoughts. The total person can be affected by disregard of fundamental spiritual laws.

To live harmoniously and effectively we must have some knowledge of the laws governing physical health, but of more importance is knowledge of the laws which govern the spiritual side of our natures. All the great religions in their teachings provide us with fundamental spiritual concepts, but often the knowledge we seek is so covered over with symbolism and parables as to be difficult to discern. A study of Theosophy gives us this knowledge more directly, and at the same time Theosophy enables us to discern the same teachings in religious scriptures. We learn from theosophical teachings what our behavior must be if we are to conform with the principles which lead to harmony and inner growth. We discover that there are simple but extremely important concepts which must govern our thoughts and emotions, if we are to live tranquilly and effectively. And above the mind and emotions there is the spiritual nature which should provide the keynote to the way we meet the problems of life. The behavior of the serene person must be governed by spiritual values. What are these spiritual concepts which are so important to us if we expect to live tranquilly and happily at all levels of our being?

First, there is the principle of the Oneness of Life, or spirit. If we are manifestations of one life, then there is a definite kinship between us and our fellow beings. If the reality in others is the same as the reality in ourselves, then there is a basis for brotherhood which transcends sentimentality. This principle, that we are all manifestations of the One, is the master principle which should govern our behavior at all levels of our being. If we live in accordance with the knowledge that all are manifestations of one spirit, then we cannot willfully do injury to others, either by thoughts, emotions, words or actions. This means we must live not only harmless lives, but must have sympathy and understanding for others. Most of our troubles arise from a lack of recognition that the whole

universe is a manifestation of one reality. We tend to have the idea that we are not only separate from all others, but we often view the world as hostile to us and our families. The world is hostile if we are hostile, and it is friendly as we are friendly. This we can learn by personal experience.

We learn from Theosophy that man comes forth from the Divine, but is asleep, with his capacities unrealized. In the beginning, man is related to the parent spirit, Deity, as an acorn is related to an oak tree. The acorn has all the possibilities of an oak tree, but must go through a period of growth and development before these qualities are realized. So man, a spark from the Divine Flame, destined to become a radiant being, must go through a long journey before his innate divineness becomes manifest. As human beings, we have already travelled an immense journey on the road of our evolution. We still have far to go, but we have awakened to such awareness and capacities that we can begin to direct our own evolution, and thus to proceed much more rapidly than in the past. To do this we must know something of our heritage and destiny. We must have some appreciation of what we are and the purpose of our life. The spiritual aspect of our being is our real Self, and it is this aspect of us which goes through many lives here on earth, as it expands into its inherent Divinity. In order to make the most of our life here on earth, we must live according to the laws which permeate all the universe, and we must turn more and more towards spiritual values. As we recognize our kinship toward others and realize that we are all on a mighty pilgrimage which is taking us nearer to our rightful heritage, in spiritual development, then it becomes plain that anything we do to hinder the process of evolution is wrong. On the other hand, as we aid in the unfolding of the great plan of evolution, we are storing up for ourselves "treasures in heaven."

We may live in drab surroundings with very little of the world's goods, but as we can begin to appreciate the reality of this world, the reality which is always radiant and lovely, our circumstances are transformed. We can look on others and on ourselves with sympathy, with compassion, with a growing appreciation of the inner beauty which is the real in people, whether they are good or bad. Beauty, truth, wisdom, love, sympathy are spiritual qualities. We can create these spiritual values in our lives as we turn our attention to them. A person may be in good health and circumstance, and yet by being preoccupied with his own excellence, his own prestige, he can become



worried, fearful, depressed, so that the light of his life burns low. On the other hand, a person beset with illness, poverty, loneliness can draw to himself the brightness of the universe as his thoughts are filled with beauty and truth, with wisdom and compassion.

Thoughts and feelings can be fearful, depressing, filled with forebodings, making life gray, or they can bring gladness. We can build a temple of beauty and joy, a temple of rest, of loveliness, or we can build a house of gloomy shadows that is a plague to us and to our fellow beings.

Theosophical teachings can illuminate our lives and lead us to effective behavior.

Much of life's trials and troubles can be transformed into years of quiet growth and development, and when difficulties do arise because of past mistakes, they can be met calmly, with understanding.

To live harmoniously and effectively is to strive to live in accordance with the realities of this world. These realities are always in harmony with radiant love and perfect justice.

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